INTRODUCTION

THE BATTLEGROUND OF REMEMBRANCE STRUGGLES AT THE INTERSECTION OF CANADIAN WAR HISTORY AND PUBLIC MEMORY

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Here in Ottawa, symbols of war remembrance are conspicuous and ubiquitous. The National War Memorial, its great solemnity shattered by gunshots a year ago and now deepened by the memory of that tragedy, remains the country's focal point every November 11 as Canadians mourn and honour more than 100,000 lives lost in the wars of the past century.

In the foreground of that monument lies another, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, and a short distant behind is the Valiants Memorial, a ring of 14 statues and busts paying tribute to the heroes of Canadian military history. They range from the 17th-century French commander Comte de Frontenac to Mohawk fighter and diplomat Thayendanegea — a.k.a Joseph Brant of Seven Years' War fame — to War of 1812 icons Laura Secord, Charles de Salaberry and Isaac Brock, to First World War general Sir Arthur Currie, to navy pilot Robert Hampton Gray, posthumously awarded a Victoria Cross for daring exploits over Japan in the final days of the Second World War.

From there, visitors to Canada's capital don't need to roam far to do more remembering. Just steps away is a downtown park with a massive monument to aboriginal veterans and smaller memorials dedicated to Canadians who died in the Boer War and the airmen who flew with the Polish Home Army in the fight against Nazi Germany. There's even an Animals in War Memorial recognizing the contributions of horses, mules, dogs and carrier pigeons to the cause of freedom. We've barely scratched the surface of Ottawa's vast inventory of displayed military heritage — all of this even before a trip to the nearby Canadian War Museum. And it's no surprise, really, that Canada's political centre is also its principal hub of remembrance. The stately ambience of the entire National Capital Region, in

fact — the grand architecture, the ceremonial boulevards, the scenic driveways, the pantheon of bronze heroes — was explicitly mandated by Canada's postwar Liberal government and designed by French planner Jacques Gréber (author of a landmark 1950 report on beautifying and elevating the tone of Canada's capital) as an homage to Canadian veterans "in lieu of any other memorial of the war just ended." In short, Canada's capital is itself a war memorial. Lest we forget.

Clearly, former prime minister Stephen Harper and his Conservative governments of the past decade did not invent the impulse to revere wartime sacrifice. But the Harper era — ended in the federal election held on October 19, after the writing of the essays published here but before the penning of this note — generated considerable debate and discussion about whether there can, in fact, be too much remembering, and whether the commemorative urge is sometimes exploited for ulterior purposes, such as the psychic rebranding of Canada as a "warrior nation."

In their contributions to this collection, military histo-rians Serge Bernier and Terry Copp, Queen's University lecturer Jamie Swift and University of Toronto political historian John English all explore, each in different ways, how struggles between scholars, politicians, heritage advocates and others can make war remembrance its very own battleground.

Western University historian Jonathan Vance argues that the scale of a war memorial — occasionally a contentious matter in the chronicle of Canadian military commemoration — is typically overshadowed by the emotional power of the conceived monument. And art historian Laura Brandon repaints the conventional portrait of war artist and Group of Seven member A.Y. Jackson, urging a new understanding of his entire oeuvre as a kind of war memorial.

Jeremy Diamond, executive director of the Vimy Foundation, asserts in his article that the approaching 100th anniversary of the Battle of Vimy Ridge will cement that moment as a pillar of Canadian nationhood. And Jack Jedwab, executive vice-president of the Association for Canadian Studies and founding publisher of *Canadian Issues*, presents fresh polling data that probes Canadians' attitudes around remembrance and the reliability of their knowledge about the country's war history. The results offer an important reminder that the battles frequently waged over how soldiers' sacrifices and our collective military heritage are being commemorated should reflect the reality that we don't always agree on a common narrative nor even remember what truly happened in those wars gone by.